

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: CJ Updike, Oregon Interpreters in Action
Re: Support for Statewide Health Care Interpreter Portal

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Committee,

My name is CJ Updike, and I am an American Sign Language interpreter who has worked in health care interpreting for five years. I really enjoy working in healthcare and it's a passion of mine to make healthcare accessible to those who are in marginalized communities or those whose first language isn't English. It is so important to make sure that people who need an interpreter still get quality health care, and it feels really good to give them the peace of mind that they deserve.

Language barriers greatly limit the level of care given to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients. Deaf patients usually have a story or two about working with an unqualified interpreter and it becomes a topic of frustration and creates a mistrust of other interpreters who want to provide a good service.

In order to give our clients the best service possible, we have so many credentials to keep up with and those come with expensive fees and varying renewal dates makes it hard to keep track of all of them. On top of credentials we have CEUs that we need to get as well, which also cost money. These are financial barriers on top of the other things that already make it difficult to do this full-time. Language companies do not provide fair and equitable pay, and they keep a large share of the profit from the work that we do. They take advantage of us by giving appointments to non-certified interpreters because they can pay them less, so we have inconsistent work. Then when you factor in the expensive cost for healthcare insurance as independent contractors, it's pretty much impossible to sustain this as a career.

I want to do this job. I want to help people. But my quality of life is impacted by the lack of a fair and transparent system that would allow me to earn a livable wage.